

Books

Missing pieces in the "how"

THE ASSASSINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, A Searching Look at the Conspiracy and Cover-up 1968-1978. By William W. Turner and John G. Christian. New York: Random House, 1978. \$12.95.

Reviewed by Richard Raznikov

In their dramatic book Turner and Christian demonstrate with great clarity three central points: first, that Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was almost certainly in an hypnotic trance when he shot at Robert F. Kennedy, and that the trance was induced by someone other than himself; second, that it is very likely that more than one gunman fired at Kennedy and that it was the second gunman who killed the Senator; third, that the true sponsors of the assassination were extremely powerful, that they probably included the CIA, and that some important political figures (notably Evelle Younger) and the Los Angeles police systematically covered up the truth.

In their almost ten-year search for the underpinnings of conspiracy, Turner and Christian found the authorities less than helpful. The small group of LAPD officers originally assigned to "cover" the case were, in fact, "covering-up" the case. The officer who ran the "lie detector" was more interested in brow-beating or intimidating inconvenient witnesses than in ascertaining truth — and there were many inconvenient witnesses.

Turner and Christian explored a web of material which pointed inevitably to a single conclusion: the LAPD, whether through innocence (rarely) or design, managed to frustrate the investigation into Bobby Kennedy's murder. They destroyed evidence, threatened witnesses, wiped out some of their own files. They lied to news reporters and to the FBI. They had their lone assassin, Sirhan Sirhan, delivered to them, and from the public information office in the Glass House (LAPD headquarters), they spun a public fantasy of how a second Kennedy had been murdered.

Much of the material in this book is not new, but that is no criticism. That which is not new is, in fact, quite relevant to the case. What is new, principally, is the story of Jerry Owen, cardboard minister and shadowy figure behind the gun or guns at the Ambassador Hotel. Owen knew Sirhan, Owen was with Sirhan frequently, Owen had connections which might have wanted Kennedy dead, and Owen came into a huge amount of money just prior to the assassination.

The connections uncovered by Turner and Christian are the missing pieces in the "how" of it. For many years investigators have known that Sirhan was in a trance at the time of the shooting. What they needed was the linkage, something more substantive than the shadowy figures seen with Sirhan but never properly identified.

They found that hypnoprogrammer, a man named William J. Bryan, Jr. who had been used by the prosecution to hypnotize Albert DiSalvo ("The Boston Strangler"). The name "Salvo ... DiSalvo ... DiSalvo" turned up inexplicably in Sirhan's notebook, among the automatic writing, yet Sirhan did not know who DiSalvo was. Bryan had bragged, toward the end of his life, that he'd hypnotized Sirhan, although he was never used in that capacity by the police or the defense after the murder. Bryan, by the way, worked for the CIA.

The authors also, with the help of former Manson case prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi, found more than eight bullets connected with the Kennedy murder. More than eight shots fired translates to more than one gun. There is very good reason to believe, as a matter of fact, that Sirhan was firing what amounted to blanks, and wounded no one at all, while two other guns did the job.

In an important sense, this is all old news. The details of assassination and cover-up are receding in importance as the more impressive truths of our time strike home. One of these truths is that official agencies owe allegiance to fear ahead of integrity, and so our "history" is written.

According to the publishers, "Members of the



William Turner



John Christian

House Assassination Sub-committee ... may use [the book] as the basis for expanding their investigations ... to include the murder of Robert F. Kennedy." Let us hope not. Let us hope that we have learned the greatest lesson of our time: that our future belongs to each of us, and that our past should not be manufactured by the Official Pronouncements of a Big Brother government.

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